customed to being obeyed. He took me into the map room and pointed out the layout of his troops, reserves, and road networks.

I asked him about the special task of his corps. He showed a point on the map. "This is where the enemy will strike. Next, he will fan out in these two directions. I must absorb the first blow."

"Do your men know this?"

He looked at me incredulously. "You mean I should tell them they are in the most dangerous spot on the front? That is the last thing I would do. Should I encourage desertion?"

I asked in turn, "Would you object if I tell your men what task has been assigned to them?"

He scratched his beard with both hands, then said, "If you believe it will not scare them away . . . that is your business. I'll tell them how to maintain the trenches, and you will talk politics."

After a short drive through a forest torn by shells, we reached the first line of trenches. The commander of the regiment, a handful of officers, and members of the regimental committee were assembled in a blockhouse, a rather flimsy but well-disguised structure at the entrance to the trench. The commander reported to the General on conditions and recent events in the area. Boldyrev introduced me and asked the committee members what progress had been made in improving the trenches since his last visit. The chairman replied, "Comrade General, we have cleaned up debris and repaired breastworks. But we are shorthanded, you know. . . ."

Boldyrev said coldly, "The order was 'six feet,' was it not? Now let the Commissar admire your masterpiece of field fortifications."

We went along winding trenches, too narrow to let men pass in double file. The trenches were apparently kept in order. Sentries were at their posts, machine guns were properly manned. But Boldyrev was grim. At the crossing of two corridors a group of soldiers surrounded us. Boldyrev stopped and turned to the committeemen. "The order was 'six feet.' Your trenches are five feet or less in many places. This is a mousetrap. Now I will show you what the difference of a foot in depth and six inches in width can do for you. Suppose the Fritzies open the barrage. You [he pointed to one soldier] are killed. Drop to the ground, here! I am wounded." He threw himself flat on the soil. "Now, carry me to the first-aid post."

Two soldiers tried to lift the heavy General, and a third came to help them, but they could not pass over the supposedly dead comrade.

"Hurry, hurry, boys!" shouted the General. "Any of you might be in my place, bleeding to death."

Then he pushed aside the would-be stretcher-bearers, got up, and said severely, "I know what you think, boys, when I order you to make the trenches six feet deep and three feet wide at all places. You think,